



NBSF NOLA

NEW BEGINNINGS SCHOOLS FOUNDATION

July 15, 2019

Kelli R. Peterson, Ed. D.
Senior Equity and Accountability Officer
Orleans Parish School Board
2401 Westbend Parkway, STE. 5055
New Orleans, Louisiana, 70114
Dear Ms. Peterson,

I am writing this letter in response to your July 3rd, 2019, correspondence. In that correspondence, you indicated the letter served as a notice of noncompliance, level two and deemed the school noncompliant with its contractual obligations with OPSB.

Specifically, the correspondence restated several items and requests for the production of written responses and documentation, listing them as “Outstanding Submissions”. There appears to be something of a miscommunication with respect to what has been submitted. Many of the requests included in the correspondence are for items or information that has been provided by the Board to OPSB in numerous meetings and phone calls with me and our team. It was our appreciation that such communications were adequate for reporting purposes. We will make sure to implement a written communication follow up policy with respect to all OPSB correspondence moving forward, to help avoid further miscommunication. We have responded to the listed outstanding submission requests individually below to provide additional context.

1. Details of any investigation into the aforementioned allegations, including nature of investigation, documents reviewed, transcripts of interviews conducted, and any conclusions reached;

Response: As we previously discussed, Adams and Reese is performing a thorough investigation of all claims. As you are also aware, that investigation is still ongoing. That investigation is being conducted by virtue of extensive interviews, a review of documentation including student files, personnel files, correspondence between staff and facility, school policies and transcripts and other documents. The investigation is not complete. Because of that, the report is not complete and the landscape of what has been reviewed is not finished so we will need to supplement this response with an answer once we receive the report. We can tell you that Adams and Reese reviewed all

pertinent documents related to these allegations and any new issues that arose. We also confirm that we will provide a copy of the report to you once it is completed and submitted to us.

2. Any steps being taken to ensure that the integrity of the grading process is intact and to prevent any unlawful grade manipulation in the future;



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Response:

After an extensive review of PowerSchool and its capabilities, we determined that we needed a stronger Student Information System in place. We reviewed the relevant systems and determined that JCAMPUS/EDGEAR (“JCAMPUS”) would provide the security and integrity that we needed to keep our grading system protected.

Accordingly, we are changing from PowerSchool’s Student Information System to JCAMPUS. We have begun the process of migrating all of our student data from PowerSchool to JCAMPUS. We are making this change because of the additional security features of JCAMPUS. One person, our Director of Instructional Technology, will be our gatekeeper to ensure that only appropriate staff has access to student information. For instance, teachers will only have access to their own gradebooks and they will only have access to the report card function during certain times of the school year. Changes will only be made to teacher grades with that teacher’s permission and with accompanying documentation as to the reasons why the grades have been changed. When a grade is changed in JCAMPUS, it is archived, meaning, there is a record of what the grade was prior to the change. It also archives which log in credentials were used to log in and we can determine the IP Address where the change was made. Besides the gatekeeper and teachers, everyone else will have read-only access including Principals and District Staff.

3. Any steps taken to ensure against unlawful tampering with official documents;

Response:

Besides the safeguards mentioned in question #2, we are also taking additional steps to ensure our official Board minutes are secure as well. We will begin implementation of using specialty paper to print our minutes. Any erasures or attempted edits will show evidence of those changes. These pages will be maintained in a permanent minute book. Once the Board approves the minutes, the minutes will be printed on specialty paper, signed by the Board Chair and Chief Executive Officer and placed in the permanent meeting book. This will become our official Board minutes. Board minutes will be placed online but the check and balance will be the permanent minute book as this will be the official minutes of the Board.

In addition to more carefully handling and reviewing official documents, the board will also take training related to best practices for maintaining official records. Administrators will



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attend a similar training. Additionally, the Board will institute a process/policy to ensure that the official minutes are posted as soon as possible after they are approved to avoid the likelihood of tampering.

4. Any other reports or documents relevant to all the aforementioned allegations;

Response: As we have discussed on multiple occasions, our investigation is evolving in that several other areas of concern have emerged including those related to investigations of other grade changes, teacher malfeasance and improper conduct. The investigation report, once complete, will elaborate on these issues and the status of the same.

5. Any reports or documents relevant to any additional allegations or concerns that may arise as a result of investigations into the aforementioned allegations.

Response: As indicated above, the report is not complete. That report will address the first set of allegations and will also address any additional allegations that may have surfaced during the course of the first investigation. The report will address all of these allegations.

6. Confirmation that the investigative report will be provided to OPSB.

Response: Throughout this process, we have been very forthright with OPSB and we have constantly kept you apprised of the status of the investigation and the investigation report. We have also indicated that you will receive a copy of the report once it is completed. That said, we confirm yet again that we will supply a copy of the report once we receive it.

7. Clarity on whether the 3rd party investigation will include a review of any possible violations of whistleblower laws as it relates to Dr. King's dismissal by NBSF.

Response: The investigation report will address Dr. King and will address the circumstances surrounding his termination and the cause for the same.

8. A written report at the conclusion of the investigation that should summarize the details of the investigation, including documents reviewed and persons interviewed. This report should also discuss any conclusions reached and summarize any corrective action taken or planned by NBSF as a result of the investigation.

Response: We understand this and confirm that you will receive the report.



9. OPSB is requiring that NBSF submit a written plan of action that addresses actions to resolve any issues for students related to the alleged grade changes. a. If students' ability to graduate was compromised, any steps to allow for students to remedy this during the summer should be contemplated and explained. b. This plan should be submitted to OPSB at the conclusion of NBSF's investigation.

Response: We hired two experienced counselors to begin the process of going through every Senior's transcript to ensure compliance with graduation requirements. A prescription was written for each affected student detailing their missing graduation requirements. The Louisiana Department of Education oversaw and audited our decisions related to those prescriptions. As you are aware, students were missing Carnegie unit classes and End of Course requirements. We called in parents and students to conduct one on one conversations with a member from our District Staff to explain the circumstances and the remedy for their child. For parents we could not reach, we sent emails, phone calls, certified letters and sent our School Resource Officer to the last known address to deliver a letter requesting that they contact the school immediately. We offered End of Course Summer School remediation along with the End of Course exam and we offered Summer School Credit Recovery for students who needed additional credits to graduate.

10. OPSB is requiring that NBSF submit revised policies and procedures that address the allegations and prevent such allegations from occurring in the future. a. Revised policies and procedures shall be submitted to OPSB at the conclusion of NBSF's investigation.

Response: We are working to revise our policies and procedures to incorporate appropriate checks and balances in regards to grading, tampering with documents and credit recovery. Our Pupil Progression Plan and our Operations Manual are currently being extensively revised as requested by the Louisiana Department of Education and the Orleans Parish School Board. We confirm that NBSF will submit the revised policies and procedures as requested.

11. Written correspondence inclusive of any changes, remedies, and plan for the 19-20 school year, specifically: a. Credit Recovery Program and Plan; b. Organizational Chart (network and school specific); c. Financial Adjustments/Savings/Expenses.

We are presenting our budget to the Finance Committee on Tuesday, July 16th and to the Full Board on July 18th. We have made adjustments and plan to present to the Board a balanced budget. We will forward to you the draft budget on Friday, July 19th after it is presented to our Finance Committee and adjustments are made based on their comments. See Attachment A,



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which includes the cost savings from the Network Level, the Credit Recover Plan and the Organization Chart as requested.

12. NBSF shall submit a weekly summary report to OPSB inclusive of attendance reports, student level progress towards graduation, interventions offered to students not progressing, and communication to families on student level progress.

Response: We confirm that NBSF will submit a weekly report as requested. OPSB's contact for this report will be Jennifer McCormick, The Director of Strategic Initiatives. She will provide the report to you, but in the event you need to contact her, her office is located at [6026 Paris Avenue New Orleans, LA 70122](#). Her office line is 504-309-8974 and her email address is Jennifer.McCormick@newbeginningsnola.net. Our current report is attached as Attachment B.

Conclusion

We trust that you have all of the information requested. Should need additional information, feel free to contact us.

Thank you,

Raphael Gang
Board President
New Beginnings School Foundation



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